



More than 2 million Native Americans from hundreds of tribes live in the U.S. Tribal leaders met with President Obama last week. (istockphoto.com)

## Tribes Look to a Better Tomorrow



Leaders from 565 tribes meet with the President to talk out major issues facing Native American communities

By [Zach Jones](#) | December 20, 2010



This man used his native language, Navajo, as the military's secret code in World War II.

He and hundreds of other Native American leaders met and spoke with the President last Thursday.

(Saul Loeb / AFP / Getty Images)

Last week, President Obama met with hundreds of Native American leaders at the White House. The President asked them to share their ideas on how the government can better support Native American communities.

Leaders from all 565 tribes officially recognized by the U.S. government took part in the White House Tribal Nations Conference. They talked with the President about improving education, health care, and crime-fighting on Native American lands.

Native American tribes own land in America called **reservations**, which are separate from the U.S. Reservations do not have to follow all of the laws that govern other American states and territories, but reservations also do not receive the same benefits or support from the government that states receive.

The federal government recently put in place several new laws to help Native Americans, especially those who live on reservations. In July, President Obama signed the Tribal Law and Order Act, which allows crime-fighters in the U.S. government, such as police and lawyers, to work together with tribal law enforcers to combat crime on reservations. He also signed the Indian Health Care Improvement Act to give Native American youth a healthier future.

But not everyone agrees with these new laws. Many tribes are at odds with the U.S. government. They say the U.S. should have less control over native peoples and their lands. Others say the government should be doing more to support Native American groups financially.

That's why President Obama invited representatives from so many groups to the White House last week. The President and his staff wanted to hear what Native leaders think about the relationship between their communities and the U.S. government—good and bad.

Today, more than 2 million Native Americans live in the U.S. Many live on reservations, and many also live in towns and cities like most Americans. The government hopes that talking more with tribal leaders will lead to better lives for all Native Americans.

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